Bismillaahir Rahmaanir Raheem

The Sayings of the Four Imams on Taqlid

by Shaykh Muhammed bin Naasiradeen al-Albaani

Source: The Prophet's Prayer Described

Source: Tibyan.com

Abu Haneefah (rahimahullaah)

The first of them is Abu Haneefah Nu'maan ibn Thaabit, whose companions have narrated from him various sayings and diverse warnings, all of them leading to one thing: the obligation to accept the Hadeeth, and to give up following the opinions of the imaams which contradict it:

1. "When a hadeeth is found to be saheeh, then that is my madhhab."[20]

2. "It is not permitted[21] for anyone to accept our views if they do not know from where we got them."[22]

In one narration, "It is prohibited[23] for someone who does not know my evidence to give verdicts[24] on the basis of my words."

Another narration adds, "... for we are mortals: we say one thing one day, and take it back the next day."

In another narration, "Woe to you, O Ya'qub[25]! Do not write down everything you hear from me, for it happens that I hold one opinion today and reject it tomorrow, or hold one opinion tomorrow and reject it the day after tomorrow."[26]

3. "When I say something contradicting the Book of Allaah the Exalted or what is narrated from the Messenger (sallallaahu `alaihi wa sallam), then ignore my saying."[27]

Maalik ibn Anas (rahimahullaah)

As for Imaam Maalik ibn Anas, he said:

1. "Truly I am only a mortal: I make mistakes (sometimes) and I am correct (sometimes). Therefore, look into my opinions: all that agrees with the Book and the Sunnah, accept it; and all that does not agree with the Book and the Sunnah, ignore it."[28]

2. "Everyone after the Prophet (sallallaahu `alaihi wa sallam) will have his sayings accepted and rejected - not so the Prophet (sallallaahu `alaihi wa sallam)."[29]

3. Ibn Wahb said: "I heard Maalik being asked about cleaning between the toes during ablution. He said, `The people do not have to do that.' I did not approach him until the crowd had lessened, when I said to him, `We know of a sunnah about that.' He said, `What is that ?' I said, `Laith ibn Sa'd, Ibn Lahee'ah and `Amr ibn al-Haarith narrated to us from Yazeed ibn `Amr al-Ma'aafiri from Abu `Abdur-Rahman al-Hubuli from Mustawrid ibn Shaddaad al-

Qurashi who said, `I saw the Messenger of Allaah (sallallaahu `alaihi wa sallam) rubbing between his toes with his little finger.' He said, `This hadeeth is sound; I had not heard of it at all until now.' Afterwards, I heard him being asked about the same thing, on which he ordered cleaning between the toes."[30]

Shaafi'i (rahimahullaah)

As for Imaam Shaafi'i, the quotations from him are most numerous and beautiful[31], and his followers were the best in sticking to them:

1. "The sunnahs of the Messenger of Allaah (sallallaahu `alaihi wa sallam) reach, as well as escape from, every one of us. So whenever I voice my opinion, or formulate a principle, where something contrary to my view exists on the authority of the Messenger of Allaah (sallallaahu `alaihi wa sallam), then the correct view is what the Messenger of Allaah (sallallaahu `alaihi wa sallam) has said, and it is my view."[32]

2. "The Muslims are unanimously agreed that if a sunnah of the Messenger of Allaah (sallallaahu `alaihi wa sallam) is made clear to someone, it is not permitted[33] for him to leave it for the saying of anyone else."[34]

3. "If you find in my writings something different to the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allaah (sallallaahu `alaihi wa sallam), then speak on the basis of the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allaah (sallallaahu `alaihi wa sallam), and leave what I have said."

In one narration: "... then follow it (the Sunnah), and do not look sideways at anyone else's saying."[35]

4. "When a hadeeth is found to be saheeh, then that is my madhhab."[36]

5. "You[37] are more knowledgeable about Hadeeth than I, so when a hadeeth is saheeh, inform me of it, whether it is from Kufah, Basrah or Syria, so that I may take the view of the hadeeth, as long as it is saheeh."[38]

6. "In every issue where the people of narration find a report from the Messenger of Allaah (sallallaahu `alaihi wa sallam) to be saheeh which is contrary to what I have said, then I take my saying back, whether during my life or after my death."[39]

7. "If you see me saying something, and contrary to it is authentically-reported from the Prophet (sallallaahu `alaihi wa sallam), then know that my intelligence has departed."[40]

8. "For everything I say, if there is something authentic from the Prophet (sallallaahu `alaihi wa sallam) contrary to my saying, then the hadeeth of the Prophet (sallallaahu `alaihi wa sallam) comes first, so do not follow my opinion."[41]

9. "Every statement on the authority of the Prophet (sallallaahu `alaihi wa sallam) is also my view, even if you do not hear it from me."[42]

Ahmad ibn Hanbal (rahimahullaah)

Imaam Ahmad was the foremost among the Imaams in collecting the Sunnah and sticking to

it, so much so that he even "disliked that a book consisting of deductions and opinions be written."[43] Because of this he said:

1. "Do not follow my opinion; neither follow the opinion of Maalik, nor Shaafi'i, nor Awzaa'i, nor Thawri, but take from where they took."[44]

In one narration: "Do not copy your Deen from anyone of these, but whatever comes from the Prophet (sallallaahu `alaihi wa sallam) and his Companions, take it; next are their Successors, where a man has a choice."

Once he said: "Following[45] means that a man follows what comes from the Prophet (sallallaahu `alaihi wa sallam) and his Companions; after the Successors, he has a choice."[46]

2. "The opinion of Awzaa'i, the opinion of Maalik, the opinion of Abu Haneefah: all of it is opinion, and it is all equal in my eyes. However, the proof is in the narrations (from the Prophet (sallallaahu `alaihi wa sallam) and his Companions)."[47]

3. "Whoever rejects a statement of the Messenger of Allaah (sallallaahu `alaihi wa sallam) is on the brink of destruction."[48]

Footnotes:

20 Ibn `Aabideen in al-Haashiyah (1/63), and in his essay Rasm al-Mufti (1/4 from the Compilation of the Essays of Ibn `Aabideen), Shaikh Saalih al-Fulaani in Eeqaaz al-Himam (p. 62) & others. Ibn `Aabideen quoted from Sharh al-Hidaayah by Ibn al-Shahnah al-Kabeer, the teacher of Ibn al-Humaam, as follows:

"When a hadeeth contrary to the Madhhab is found to be saheeh, one should act on the hadeeth, and make that his madhhab. Acting on the hadeeth will not invalidate the follower's being a Hanafi, for it is authentically reported that Abu Haneefah said, `When a hadeeth is found to be saheeh, then that is my madhhab', and this has been related by Imaam Ibn `Abdul Barr from Abu Haneefah and from other imaams."

This is part of the completeness of the knowledge and piety of the Imaams, for they indicated by saying this that they were not versed in the whole of the Sunnah, and Imaam Shaafi'i has elucidated this thoroughly (see later). It would happen that they would contradict a sunnah because they were unaware of it, so they commanded us to stick to the Sunnah and regard it as part of their Madhhab. May Allaah shower His mercy on them all.

21Ar.: halaal

22 Ibn `Abdul Barr in Al-Intiqaa' fi Fadaa'il ath-Thalaathah al- A'immah al-Fuqahaa' (p. 145), Ibn al-Qayyim in I'laam al- Mooqi'een (2/309), Ibn `Aabideen in his Footnotes on Al-Bahr ar-Raa'iq (6/293) and in Rasm al-Mufti (pp. 29,32) & Sha'raani in Al-Meezaan (1/55) with the second narration. The last narration was collected by `Abbaas ad-Dawri in At- Taareekh by Ibn Ma'een (6/77/1) with a saheeh sanad on the authority of Zafar, the student of Imaam Abu Haneefah. Similar narrations exist on the authority of Abu Haneefah's companions Zafar, Abu Yoosuf and `Aafiyah ibn Yazeed; cf. Eeqaaz (p. 52). Ibn al-Qayyim firmly certified its authenticity on the authority of Abu Yoosuf in I'laam al-Mooqi'een (2/344). The addition to the second narration is referenced by the editor of Eeqaaz (p. 65) to Ibn `Abdul Barr, Ibn al-Qayyim and others.

If this is what they say of someone who does not know their evidence, what would be their response to one who knows that the evidence contradicts their saying, but still gives verdicts opposed to the evidence?! Therefore, reflect on this saying, for it alone is enough to smash blind following of opinion; that is why one of the muqallid shaikhs, when I criticised his giving a verdict using Abu Haneefah's words without knowing the evidence, refused to believe that it was a saying of Abu Haneefah!

23 Ar.:haraam

24 Ar.: fatwaa

25 i.e. Imaam Abu Haneefah's illustrious student, Abu Yoosuf (rahimahullaah). 26 This was because the Imaam would often base his view on Qiyaas (Analogy), after which a more potent analogy would occur to him, or a hadeeth of the Prophet (sallallaahu `alaihi wa sallam) would reach him, so he would accept that and ignore his previous view. Sha'raani's words in Al-Meezaan (1/62) are summarised as:

"Our belief, as well as that of every researcher into Imaam Abu Haneefah (radi Allaahu `anhu), is that, had he lived until the recording of the

Sharee'ah, and the journeys of the Preservers of Hadeeth to the various cities and frontiers in order to collect and acquire it, he would have accepted it and ignored all the analogies he had employed. The amount of qiyaas in his Madhhab would have been just as little as that in other Madhhabs, but since the evidences of the Sharee'ah had been scattered with the Successors and their successors, and had not been collected in his lifetime, it was necessary that there be a lot of qiyaas in his Madhhab compared to that of other imaams. The later scholars then made their journeys to find and collect ahaadeeth from the various cities and towns and wrote them down; hence, some ahaadeeth of the Sharee'ah explained others. This is the reason behind the large amount of qiyaas in his Madhhab, whereas there was little of it in other Madhhabs."

Abul-Hasanaat Al-Lucknowi quoted his words in full in An- Naafi' al-Kabeer (p. 135), endorsing and expanding on it in his footnotes, so whoever wishes to consult it should do so there.

Since this is the justification for why Abu Haneefah has sometimes unintentionally contradicted the authentic ahaadeeth - and it is a perfectly acceptable reason, for Allaah does not burden a soul with more than it can bear - it is not permissible to insult him for it, as some ignorant people have done. In fact, it is obligatory to respect him, for he is one of the imaams of the Muslims through whom this Deen has been preserved and handed down to us, in all its branches; also, for he is rewarded under any circumstance: whether he is correct or wrong. Nor is it permissible for his devotees to continue sticking to those of his statements which contradict the authentic ahaadeeth, for those statements are effectively not part of his Madhhab, as the above sayings show. Hence, these are two extremes, and the truth lies in between. "Our Lord! Forgive us, and our brethren who came before us into the Faith; and leave not, in our hearts, any rancour against those who have believed. Our Lord! You are indeed Full of Kindness, Most Merciful." (Al-Hashr 59:10)

27 Al-Fulaani in Eeqaaz al-Himam (p. 50), tracing it to Imaam Muhammad and then saying, "This does not apply to the mujtahid, for he is not bound to their views anyway, but it applies to the muqallid."

Sha'raani expanded on that in Al-Meezaan (1/26):

"If it is said: `What should I do with the ahaadeeth which my Imaam did not use, and which were found to be authentic after his death?' The answer which is fitting for you is: `That you act on them, for had your Imaam come across them and found them to be authentic, he would have instructed you to act on them, because all the Imaams were captives in the hand of the Sharee'ah.' He who does so will have gathered all the good with both his hands, but he who says, `I will not act according to a hadeeth unless my Imaam did so', he will miss a great amount of benefit, as is the case with many followers of the Imaams of the Madhhabs. It would be better for them to act on every hadeeth found to be authentic after the Imaam's time, hence implementing the will of the Imaams; for it is our firm belief about the Imaams that had they lived longer and come to know of those ahaadeeth which were found authentic after their time, they would have definitely accepted and acted according to them, ignoring any analogies they may have previously made, and any views they may have previously held."

28 Ibn `Abdul Barr in Jaami' Bayaan al-'Ilm (2/32), Ibn Hazm, quoting from the former in Usool al-Ahkaam (6/149), & similarly Al-Fulaani (p. 72)

29 This iswell known among the later scholars to be a saying of Maalik. Ibn `Abdul Haadi declared it saheeh in Irshaad as- Saalik (227/1); Ibn `Abdul Barr in Jaami' Bayaan al-'Ilm (2/91) & Ibn Hazm in Usool al-Ahkaam (6/145, 179) had narrated it as a saying of Al-Hakam ibn `Utaibah and Mujaahid; Taqi ad- Deen as-Subki gave it, delighted with its beauty, in al- Fataawaa (1/148) as a saying of Ibn `Abbaas, and then said: "These words were originally those of Ibn `Abbaas and Mujaahid, from whom Maalik (radi Allaahu `anhu) took them, and he became famous for them." It seems that Imaam Ahmad then took this saying from them, as Abu Daawood has said in Masaa'il of Imaam Ahmad (p. 276): "I heard Ahmad say, `Everyone is accepted and rejected in his opinions, with the exception of the Prophet (sallallaahu `alaihi wa sallam)'."

30 From the Introduction to Al-Jarh wat-Ta'deel of Ibn Abi Haatim, pp. 31-2.

31 Ibn Hazm says in Usool al-Ahkaam (6/118):

"Indeed, all the fuqahaa' whose opinions are followed were opposed to taqleed, and they forbade their companions from following their opinion blindly. The sternest among them in this regard was Shaafi'i (rahimahullaah), for he repeatedly emphasised, more than anyone else, following the authentic narrations and accepting whatever the proof dictated; he also made himself innocent of being followed totally, and announced this to those around him. May this benefit him in front of Allaah, and may his reward be of the highest, for he was the cause of great good."

32 Related by Haakim with a continuous sanad up to Shaafi'i, as in Taareekh Dimashq of Ibn `Asaakir (15/1/3), I'laam al- Mooqi'een (2/363, 364) & Eeqaaz (p. 100).

33 Ar.: halaal

34 Ibn al-Qayyim (2/361) & Fulaani (p. 68) 35 Harawi in Dhamm al-Kalaam (3/47/1), Khateeb in Al-Ihtijaaj bi ash-Shaafi'i (8/2), Ibn `Asaakir (15/9/10), Nawawi in Al- Majmoo' (1/63), Ibn al-Qayyim (2/361) & Fulaani (p. 100); the second narration is from Hilyah al-Awliyaa' of Abu Nu'aim. 36 Nawawi in Al-Majmoo' (1/63), Sha'raani (1/57), giving its sources as Haakim and Baihaqi, & Fulaani (p. 107). Sha'raani said, "Ibn Hazm said, `That is, ... found to be saheeh by him or by any other Imaam'." His saying given next confirms this understanding.

Nawawi says: "Our companions acted according to this in the matter of tathweeb (calling to prayer in addition to the adhaan), the conditions on coming out of ihraam due to illness, and other issues well-known in the books of the Madhhab. Among those of our companions who are reported to have passed judgment on the basis of the hadeeth (i.e. rather than the saying of Shaafi'i) are Abu Ya'qoob al-Buweeti and Abu l-Qaasim ad-Daariki. Of our companions from the muhadditheen, Imaam Abu Bakr Al-Baihaqi and others employed this approach. Many of our earliest companions, if they faced an issue for which there was a hadeeth, and the madhhab of Shaafi'i was contrary to it, would act according

to the hadeeth and give verdicts based on it, saying, `The madhhab of Shaafi'i is whatever agrees with the hadeeth.' Shaikh Abu `Amr (Ibn as-Salaah) says, `Whoever among the Shaafi'is found a hadeeth contradicting his Madhhab, he would consider whether he fulfilled the conditions of ijtihaad generally, or in that particular topic or issue, in which case he would be free to act on the hadeeth; if not, but nevertheless he found it hard to contradict the hadeeth after further analysis, he would not be able to find a convincing justification for opposing the hadeeth. Hence, it would be left for him to act according to the hadeeth if an independent imaam other than Shaafi'i had acted on it, and this would be justification for his leaving the Madhhab of his Imaam in that issue.' What he (Abu `Amr) has said is correct and established. Allaah knows best."

There is another possibility which Ibn as-Salaah forgot to mention: what would one do if he did not find anyone else who acted according to the hadeeth? This has been answered by Taqi ad-Deen as-Subki in his article, The Meaning of Shaafi'i's saying, "When a hadeeth is found to be saheeh, then that is my madhhab" (p. 102, vol. 3): "For me, the best thing is to follow the hadeeth. A person should imagine himself in front of the Prophet (sallallaahu `alaihi wa sallam), just having heard it from him: would there be leeway for him to delay acting on it? No, by Allaah ... and everyone bears a responsibility according to his understanding."

The rest of this discussion is given and analysed in I'laam al- Muwaqqi'een (2/302, 370) and in the book of al-Fulaane, (full title:) Eeqaaz Himam ulu l-Absaar, lil-Iqtidaa' bi Sayyid al- Muhaajireen wal-Ansaar, wa Tahdheeruhum `an al-Ibtidaa' ash- Shaa'i' fi l-Quraa wal-Amsaar, min Taqleed al-Madhaahib ma'a l- Hamiyyah wal-'Asabiyyah bain al-Fuqahaa' al-A'saar (Awakening the Minds of those who have Perception, towards following the Leader of the Emigrants and Helpers, and Warning them against the Innovation Widespread among Contemporary Jurists in the Towns and Cities, of following Madhhabs with Zeal and Party- Spirit). The latter is a unique book in its field, which every desirer of truth should study with understanding and reflection. 37 addressing Imaam Ahmad ibn Hanbal (rahimahullaah).

38 Related by Ibn Abi Haatim in Aadaab ash-Shaafi'i (pp. 94-5), Abu Nu'aim in Hulyah al-Awliyaa' (9/106), al-Khateeb in Al- Ihtijaaj bish-Shaafi'i (8/1), and from him Ibn `Asaakir (15/9/1), Ibn `Abdul Barr in al-Intiqaa' (p. 75), Ibn al-Jawzi in Manaaqib al-Imaam Ahmad (p. 499) & Harawi (2/47/2) with three routes from `Abdullaah ibn Ahmad ibn Hanbal from his father that Shaafi'i said to him: ...etc; thus, it is authentic on the authority of Shaafi'i. This is why Ibn al- Qayyim attributed it definitely to him in I'laam (2/325), as did Fulaani in Eeqaaz (p. 152) and then said: "Baihaqi said, `This is why he - i.e. Shaafi'i - used hadeeth so much, because he gathered knowledge from the people of Hijaaz, Syria, Yemen and `Iraq, and so accepted all that he found to be authentic, without leaning towards or looking at what he had considered out of the Madhhab of the people of his land when the truth was clear to him elsewhere. Some of those before him would limit themselves to what they found in the Madhhab of the people of their land, without attempting to ascertain the authenticity of what opposed it. May Allaah forgive all of us'."

39 Abu Nu'aim (9/107), Harawi (47/1), Ibn al-Qayyim in I'laam al-Muwaqqi'een (2/363) & Fulaani (p. 104).

40 Ibn Abi Haatim in al-Aadaab (p. 93), Abul Qaasim Samarqandi in al-Amaali, as in the selection from it by Abu Hafs al- Mu'addab (234/1), Abu Nu'aim (9/106) & Ibn `Asaakir (15/10/1) with a saheeh sanad.

41 Ibn Abi Haatim, Abu Nu'aim & Ibn `Asaakir (15/9/2).

42 Ibn Abi Haatim (pp. 93-4).

43 Ibn al-Jawzi in al-Manaaqib (p. 192)

44 Fulaani (p. 113) & Ibn al-Qayyim in I'laam (2/302).

45 Ar.: ittibaa'

46 Abu Daawood in Masaa'il of Imaam Ahmad (pp. 276-7)

47 Ibn `Abdul Barr in Jaami' Bayaan al-'Ilm (2/149).

48 Ibn al-Jawzi (p. 182)